

TRANSIT'S GOLDEN PASSPORT PROGRAM EXPANDS THANKS TO THE PEOPLE'S TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Miami-Dade Transit recently introduced the Patriot Passport, a new transit pass made possible by the People's Transportation Plan. The Patriot Passport allows honorably discharged U.S. veterans with an annual income of less than \$22,000 to ride free on the transit system. With Board of County Commission approval in June of this year, the new Patriot Passport is now available to veterans of any age who reside in Miami-Dade County.

"Our veterans sacrificed a lot to protect our freedom. This free-transit-pass program allows us to give back to local U.S. veterans now living on less than \$22,000 a year," said MDT Director Roosevelt Bradley. "The Patriot Passport will help these selected veterans with their transportation needs."

The Patriot Passport program is modeled after MDT's Golden Passport. At its inception in December 1999, only Miami-Dade residents of 65-plus years and with a household income of \$20,000 or less were eligible for the Golden Passport. After voter approval of the half-penny referendum in November 2002, the income requirement was dropped, and all Miami-Dade senior citizens and Social Security beneficiaries became eligible for the Golden Passport.

Even with the initial eligibility limitations, the Golden Passport was an instant success. Once announced in the media, Miami-Dade County offices, including the mayor, county manager, and commissioners' offices, were inundated with calls from senior citizens,

their family members, and senior day-care organizations. To date, 103,883 senior citizens 65 and older along with Social Security recipients under age 65 enjoy free transit rides anytime with the Golden Passport.

Eligible veterans can apply for and receive their Patriot Passport immediately at any transit service center.

Or apply at any neighbor-

hood Team Metro office to receive the pass by mail. Applicants must show proof of an honorable discharge (DD214) and household income (check stub). A Florida driver's license, veteran's ID, a utility bill, or Veterans Administration verification letter will prove residency.

Approximately 759 veterans now ride free on transit with the Patriot Passport. That number increases daily. Florida, the Sunshine State, is a mecca for retirees and a winter home to thousands. According to the 2000 US Census, an estimated 96,000 senior citizens 65 years and older reside in Miami-Dade County alone, nearly 25,000 of them are U.S. veterans.

"The need for the Patriot Passport is there," said Bradley, "and we're working to get the word out to the public."

The Patriot Passport expires annually. Each year, veterans will be required to prove eligibility. Veterans who qualify can visit www.miamidade.gov/transit or call 305-770-3131 (305-891-3131 south of SW 216th Street) for information about the new pass or for the location of the nearest transit service center or Team Metro office.

